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THE LIBERATION SOCIETY.

EIGHTH TRIENNIAL CONFERENCE.

The largest and the most influential Conference that has ever been held in connection with the Liberation movement, took place on Tuesday and Wednesday, at the City Terminus Hotel, Cannon-street. About eight hundred delegates, from about three hundred towns in England, Wales, and Scotland, then assembled to discuss the present position of the movement. In another part of this journal will be found a list, as complete as it has been possible to make it, of the public bodies and towns that sent representatives. In addition, however, to those who were formally delegated, many invited persons were present, as well as most of the members of the London and Country Executive Committee, who by virtue of their position, were entitled to take part in the proceedings. Amongst those present were, Mr. J. R. Mills, M.P., Mr. Candlish, M.P., Mr. Cowen, M.P., Mr. P. A. Taylor, M.P., Mr. Barnes, M.P., Mr. E. Baines, M.P., Mr. D. McLaren, M.P., Mr. B. Whitworth, M.P., Sir F. Crossley, M.P., Mr. C. Gilpin, M.P., Sir John Gray, M.P., Sir John Bowring, Mr. Wm. Edwards, Mr. E. Miall, Mr. H. K. Ellington, Mr. J. Carvell Williams, Rev. A. Hannay, Rev. John Pillans, Rev. H. Richard, Rev. W. Reed, Rev. J. G. Rogers, Mr. J. Templeton, Rev. F. Trestrail, Mr. T. C. Turberville, Dr. E. B. Underhill, Messrs. Wm. Baines, J. J. Colman (Norwich), Rev. G. W. Conder, Rev. R. W. Dale (Birmingham), Mr. N. Illingworth (Bradford), Mr. E. S. Robinson, Rev. T. Green, Rev. John Kennedy, Mr. Robert Kell, Mr. James Hanson, Mr. R. Leader, Mr. H. Lee, Rev. C. H. Spurgeon, Rev. J. A. Spurgeon, Rev. Dr. Landels, Rev. W. Brock, Rev. E. White, Rev. C. Stovel, Rev. J. H. Hinton, Rev. Mark Wilks, Edwd. Butler, Esq., (Leeds), Rev. J. P. Mursell, Rev. James Mursell, Rev. P. J. Turquand, Rev. R. W. Betts, Rev. Dr. Ackworth, Rev. Dr. Gotch, Rev. J. H. Millard, Rev. C. Vince, Rev. Dr. Stock, Rev. H. T. Robjohns, Rev. John Guthrie, M.A., Rev. Dr. Edmond, Rev. J. Fison, Rev. T. Arnold, E. Grimwade, Esq., Rev. J. C. Gallaway, Mr. E. Leach, Rev. R. H. Smith, Rev. G. Gould, Rev. G. C. Hatton, A. A. Croll, Esq., Rev. Arthur Mursell, Rev. Thomas Toller, Mr. Stafford Allen, Rev. Samuel Cox, Rev. Christopher Nevile, M.A., R. Dawbarn, Esq., Rev. H. W. Parkinson, Mr. H. S. Skeats, Rev. Ll. D. Bevan, Mr. David Lloyd, Rev. F. Stephens, Mr. Thos. Roberts, Mr. J. W. Buckley, Mr. John Bennett, Mr. S. Courtauld, Mr. T. Mason Jones, Rev. Dr. Angus, Rev. G. Robson, M.A., Rev. T. Aveling, Mr. J. B. Willans, Mr. Joseph Spencer, Mr. Potto Brown, &c. It will be seen from the list of towns that the country was represented from the extreme north of Scotland to the south of Cornwall. Of the public bodies, the Presidents of the Baptist Union and of the Bible Christian Conference took part in the proceeding; the Baptists were very largely represented; the Congregationalists sent some of their most conspicuous members of that body; as also did the Unitarians, the Primitive Methodists, and the United Methodist Free Church Connexion. There were also some Wesleyans of the Old Connexion present.

A prayer-meeting, privately arranged, was held in one of the rooms of the Hotel at half-past nine, and was attended by many members of the Conference. At eleven the proceedings opened. There were, at that time, about six hundred delegates present, and soon afterwards the magnificent large hall of the hotel was completely filled, as well as the visitors' gallery, in which were several ladies.

A business committee having been appointed to nominate chairmen and arrange the programme of the proceedings,

Mr. HENRY LEE (chairman of that committee) reported that the following gentlemen had been selected to preside over the sittings of the Conference:—The Rev. J. P. Mursell, of Leicester, for the first sitting; Thomas Barnes, Esq., M.P., for the second sitting; and Edward Butler, Esq., of Leeds, for the third sitting.

The Rev. J. P. Mursell then took the chair.

The CHAIRMAN, in opening the proceedings, said: The first note to be sounded, or the first word to be uttered, I think, on the present occasion must be one of congratulation, even if not of pleasing surprise. Some of us who are present this morning recollect this Society in its earliest days. We saw it, gentlemen, in its cradle, and we helped to nurse it there. We have observed it with great pleasure and interest through its childhood and even along its valiant youth. It now seems to be putting on the proportions of full manhood. I think the Society owes its present position to the soundness of its principle and to the sacredness of its cause—that principle being universal religious liberty, and the more immediate object of this Society being the disenthralment of religion from all State control throughout the British realms. (Applause.) I think the Society is greatly indebted—very highly indebted—for its present position to the quiet intrepidity of its friends. A greater work in the same time has never been more unostentatiously accomplished than that which you have attained. Quiet and silence, and absence of all boisterousness and noise and clamour and vulgar taste for popularity, have distinguished this Society all along its course. I think to that source, as to others, we are indebted for its present position. So, too, are we indebted to the exceeding assiduity of all who have served it—I mean friends that are gone as well as friends who are present, names sacred to memory, sacred in the records of this Society to the end of time, great and good men whose faces we are never to see again in this world,—not least among whom is the recently deceased Dr. Thomas Price. Nor can we say too much in praise of the conduct of the committees and of the admirable Treasurer of this Society. They have always been at their posts through evil report and through good report. I think we have not sufficiently appreciated the services they have rendered us. We are indebted to the too frequently uncharitable tactics of our opponents. Many thanks to them for their unmanly conduct. Every possible misrepresentation that ingenuity could devise has been attempted and adopted by them. Instead of being civil, they have treated us very coarsely indeed, so that we have been benefited rather by their deportment than injured; for Englishmen like fair play. If they would treat us a little more courteously, perhaps they might have a little longer life. (Hear, hear.) We are indebted pre-eminently, gentlemen—and I ask your attention to this allusion—we are indebted pre-eminently to the Nonconforming press, and very especially to the department of it over which Edward Miall, Esq., presides—(loud applause)—a name never to be mentioned here and scarcely anywhere else this side the moon—(laughter)—without the greatest respect and esteem, and I think I have by my side the editor of a little beautiful attendant vessel called the *Liberator*, which is most admirably conducted—(Hear, hear)—both in spirit, in tone, and in adroitness. I venture to thank in your name the distinguished Mr. Miall and the less distinguished Mr. Williams—(laughter)—for their labours. But, gentlemen, I think we are indebted very much to Conservative, shall I call it, dissipation. Our Tory friends have become weak lately—weak in the head, I mean. (Laughter.) Anxious as they always are—and who is not?—to keep place when they are in, and to get at it when they are not, they have lately become grand Reformers. You know that they have even taken a step in advance of ourselves, and given us household suffrage, or something better, when we expected not half so much. They have done this, and we are indebted to them exceedingly in my opinion—indebted to them for this deportment, for I do not know, I am sure, whether this question of the Irish Church would have been brought before us just now, had there not been that previous movement. I hope the great and illustrious Gladstone—(loud applause)—will live to carry on this work to its conclusion, and that we shall be alive to see it. But permit me to say, in just concluding, that there has never been a period in the history of this Society in which its supporters needed more wisdom and more forbearance than now. We need to behave, gentlemen, with the highest and widest discretion; we need to be serene; we need to be determined; and yet we need to be humble, so to say—forbearing. I ask this great assembly, representing so many hundreds of thousands of Liberal Nonconformists in this country, to try to compress within the future labours to which they are summoned even a greater amount of patience and discretion than they have hitherto evinced. (Hear, hear.) I think, gentlemen, there is still a great work to be done. There is many a pass to be got through, many a mountain height to be climbed before we can reach the Magdala; but, under the guidance of our friend here, a second Napier, my esteemed friend Mr. Miall, I hope we shall go on conquering and to conquer, and that the day is not far distant when our bloodless victory will be won amidst the shouts of men and the rejoicings of the skies. (Loud applause.)

THE REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

This was read by Mr. CARVELL WILLIAMS, and as it was a lengthy document, we can give but the leading passages. It commenced by referring to the Parliamentary reverses which had been experienced when the last Conference met, but they were felt to be but temporary, and so far from abating the ardour of the Society's supporters, had but the effect of stimulating them to fresh exertion.

If the Conference then assembled was filled with joy at the thought of an unbroken series of successes in Parliament, and of an astonishing advance in the opinion of the country, and if it were able to indulge in hopes scarcely dreamed of at an earlier period, the change might be attributed, in part, at least, to the attitude assumed by the Society and its supporters at a moment when exulting opponents were rejoicing at, what was imagined to be their final overthrow.

It was then that it was proposed to raise a special fund of 25,000*l.*, and, but for the commercial crisis, the whole would have been raised. It had reached 19,387*l.*, and, as the result, the average income from subscriptions in the last three years had been 6,826*l.* But the Society's necessities were constantly increasing; the last year's expenditure had been the highest (7,489*l.*) since the formation of the Society.

The great success of the movement among young men was next referred to in terms of great satisfaction, and the committee trusted that they did "not miscalculate, in looking for the services of many new and valued allies, when those who have been the subjects of this training have become qualified to take their part in a struggle which is evidently fast approaching. Such an issue will afford the best guarantee of the continuance and completion of their own work, and that the achievements of the fathers will be surpassed by the greater achievements of their sons."

After the general election of 1865, three religious equality measures were passed, viz.:—

(1) The Dublin Professorship Bill, which opened certain professorships in the University of Dublin to all persons, irrespective of their religious creed. (2) The Bill abolishing the declaration against transubstantiation and other doctrines or observances of the Church of Rome, formerly required as a qualification for certain offices. (3) The Oaths and Offices Bill, which has made all the Queen's subjects, without regard to creed, eligible to hold the office of Lord Chancellor of Ireland, has substituted an unobjectionable oath for offensive oaths previously required from office-holders, and has repealed the penalty attaching to mayors, and other public officers, for attending Nonconformist places of worship with the insignia of their office.

The report sketched the history of the University Tests Bill and Fellows of Colleges Bill, now embraced in Mr. Coleridge's bill, respecting which it was said—

Effective support has been rendered to the measure by influential members of both Universities, and, as the result of a movement on the part of the Nonconformist tutors and undergraduates at Cambridge, many petitions from Nonconformists have been presented in its favour. The second reading of the bill is fixed for the 13th of May, and, unless unforeseen obstacles present themselves, it may be expected to pass, at least, the Lower House. And that it will at no distant date become law, may be anticipated, not merely because of the strength of the support afforded to it, both by the press and by public opinion, but because of the increased vehemence with which it is now assailed by its opponents. Their grounds of opposition have, however, so far shifted, that resistance is now offered, not in the interest of the Establishment, the exclusive pretensions of which have been abated, but for the sake of religious truth, which, it is affirmed, will be imperilled by the measure. Its promoters are, probably, as faithfully attached to the

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cause of religion as those who denounce their designs as "infidel" and "godless"; but they fail to perceive the practical value of the existing safeguards, and deny that "the only method of securing definite Christian education" is "to maintain the connection of the University and the Colleges with the National Church." In this case, as in others, the claims of justice and the claims of truth, so far from being antagonistic, may be harmonised to the advantage alike of the Universities and of the nation, and the pursuit of learning be associated with a spirit of Catholicity, instead of with ecclesiastical exclusiveness.

The Church-rate question was next dealt with at length, and the following is the passage referring to Mr. Gladstone's bill of this session:—

This year, the position of the question has undergone another change, not only by reason of the re-introduction of Mr. Gladstone's bill, in an improved shape; but from the reception given to it by those who have hitherto been the staunch supporters of compulsory Church-rates. So far as the principle of the bill was concerned, the committee felt that they could not with consistency recede from the position which they had occupied in 1865; but it seemed to them that their practical policy might be fairly determined by the circumstances, not of that year, but of 1868. While, therefore, the bill, as now introduced, was, in respect to its details, a better bill than that of 1866, the committee felt themselves at liberty to urge upon its author the necessity for amending provisions which seemed to them objectionable. They were also of opinion that, should the bill be seriously opposed, it would not be their duty to assist in carrying it by the mere force of numbers; but that, in that case, they should reserve their efforts for the bill for total abolition, which they were willing should, for a time, be held in abeyance. In regard to both these points, they were met by Mr. Gladstone in a spirit of fairness and of frankness which could not be too highly appreciated; and, as the result, they were enabled to await the second reading of the bill without misgivings, if not with high expectations. The proceedings on that occasion afforded further proof, if proof were needed, of the progress of right principles, and showed that the victory of the previous session had done much to hasten the termination of this protracted struggle. The Compulsory Church-rates Abolition Bill was read a second time without any division, and with the apparent concurrence of the greater portion of the party by which two years before it had been vigorously assailed. In the committee on the bill the first and vital clause of the bill, which enacts that no legal proceeding shall be taken to compel the payment of Church-rates, was carried by a majority of 137, against the few remaining adherents of the principle of coercion, and the bill was also greatly improved by amendments, which were adopted with unanimity, and which removed the objections taken by the committee. The House of Lords has now the opportunity of determining whether this irritating question shall be set at rest, by the adoption of a measure which, whatever may be its shortcomings, has secured the concurrence of widely-differing parties; or whether that object must be attained by the extinction of Church-rates in any form. Their Lordships have, indeed, accepted the principle of the bill, by reading it a second time, but it must be acknowledged that they have done it in so grudging a spirit as to have deprived the concession of the grace with which it might otherwise have been invested in the eyes of voluntaries. With a view to the removal of alleged defects in the bill, they have also referred it to a select committee, instead of discussing its details under the public eye, in a committee of the whole House. Whether this course has been adopted with any sinister purpose, and whether, as the result, the measure is likely to be injured, or to be improved, are points which the committee consider it needless to discuss. But they believe they express the sentiments of all their constituents in distinctly intimating that, should the alterations made in the bill violate its essential principles, or be likely to prove mischievous in their operation, it will be the duty of its promoters to express their dissent from the amendments, even though such dissent should involve the ultimate abandonment of the measure. As the bill has never been regarded with admiration by abolitionists, they, at least, will not be disconcerted at such a result. On the contrary, they will accept the failure of Mr. Gladstone's conciliatory proposal as an indication that it will be their duty, in a new Parliament, to take their final stand on the principle of absolute abolition.

The Society's efforts in connection with the Irish Church question commenced with Mr. Miall's motion in 1856, when he gave notice of resolutions substantially resembling those of Mr. Gladstone, and was supported by 121 members. The report proceeded:—

It was last year that the question assumed an importance which indicated the approach of what has since proved to be a great legislative crisis. Then, aided by all the support which the friends of religious equality could afford, Sir John Gray obtained the votes of no fewer than 250 members, and was defeated by the small majority of twelve. And then it was that Mr. Gladstone openly declared his hostility to the continued existence of the Irish Establishment, by insisting that it must be dealt with in accordance with the "broad, firm principles of civil rights and justice"; and that "we must embrace those principles, and follow them to their conclusions, to whatever they may lead."

The alarming growth of political disaffection in Ireland had now compelled all parties to acknowledge that the existing relations of the State to the religious bodies of that country could not longer be maintained. But this state of feeling, hopeful as it was, displayed itself in influential political quarters in a form which the committee could not but regard with the gravest apprehension. In moving, in June last, for the appointment of a Royal Commission to inquire into the nature and application of the property in possession of the Irish Establishment, Earl Russell declared himself to be favourable to the division of that property between the three principal religious denominations in Ireland; and outside the walls of Parliament it was known that public men, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, were sedulously endeavouring to further such a design. It was, therefore, felt to be of vital importance to adopt prompt measures, not only to ensure its defeat, but, if possible, to convince the leaders of the Liberal party that a movement in that direction would be utterly futile, and would be in the highest degree mischievous. With that view, they passed, and widely circulated, resolutions condemnatory of the suggested policy, and urging the adoption of the only effectual substitute—the disestablishment of the Protestant Episcopal Church, the impartial disendowment of other State-endowed bodies, and the application of the ecclesiastical property of the nation to national and unsectarian purposes.

In further pursuit of the object thus set before them, the committee, in the autumn of last year, instructed their secretary to visit Ireland, to obtain authentic information for their own guidance, and also to assure the leaders of the Irish people of the determination of English voluntaries to aid them to the utmost in their efforts to throw off the yoke of an alien Establishment. The information thus obtained enabled the committee to arrange their future plans with increased confidence. They then learned that both the clergy and the laity of the Roman Catholic Church were resolved not to participate in any division of the revenues of the Irish Church, and that an authoritative declaration to that effect was about to be issued by the Roman Catholic prelates. That declaration, in conjunction with other protests, has been followed by important consequences. By the entire Liberal party the idea of general endowment is now regarded as impracticable, and Lord Russell himself has frankly avowed his concurrence in that conclusion.

The committee now considered it their duty to devote all their energies to the work of enlightening their fellow-countrymen in regard to the character and working of the Irish Establishment, and of strengthening their determination to use all constitutional means to hasten its abolition by the legislature. This, therefore, has been the aim of nearly all the Society's meetings and lectures during the recent winter. For this purpose they have circulated pamphlets and tracts in every district of the country, and have supplied information to others, whose influence extended to circles which could not be reached by agencies of their own. By holding a special conference on the subject, in December last, they also sought, and not unsuccessfully, the co-operation of others, who, while differing from them in regard to some of their aims, were prepared heartily to unite in zealous efforts to do a great act of justice to the Irish people. Availing themselves of the assistance of Mr. Mason Jones,—whose knowledge of Ireland, and whose power to influence public audiences, peculiarly qualified him for the work,—they arranged for a special series of lectures and meetings which have embraced most of the large towns in the kingdom, and have drawn together assemblies which, by their numbers, their enthusiasm, and, in most cases, their unanimity, have shown that the mind of the people is set upon the accomplishment of this great work. They have, in addition, thought it expedient to afford assistance to other public bodies aiming, in this instance, at the same object as themselves, and by means of this conjoint action there have been witnessed within the last few weeks what are admitted to have been such impressive demonstrations of popular feeling as have scarcely been equalled within the memory of the present generation.

While attributing to many combined causes a rapidity of progress in regard to this question which has occasioned general surprise, the committee gladly recognise the high service rendered by Mr. Gladstone, in the decisive and courageous course which he has pursued in Parliament. By his timely and emphatic declaration that, "in the settlement of the Irish Church question, that Church, as a State-Church, must cease to exist"—that steps for effecting that object must no longer be delayed, and that it is vain to think of substituting for the existing system one of indiscriminate endowment, he not only removed all doubt in regard to his own course, but decided the policy of a great party, and created the enthusiasm essential to its success. To this great service the right honourable gentleman has added others equally important, in the explicit and incisive resolutions in which he has submitted the question for the decision of Parliament, and in the speeches in which, with the calmness and the candour of true statesmanship, he has set forth the principles by which the legislature should be guided. These principles, the committee venture to think, will be regarded by the Conference with a warmth of approbation which will not be diminished by any difference of opinion in regard to questions of detail, or to points which may call for reconsideration at a future period. They further suggest that, on the considerateness and the generosity which characterises the process of disestablishment will greatly depend its efficacy, as a means of restoring peace to a distracted country, and that it will be unwise to add to existing difficulties by hard bargaining, or by rigorous exactitude.

It is with mingled pleasure and pride that the committee claim to have had some share in securing those great majorities by which, in the recent memorable divisions, the present House of Commons has condemned the State-Church of Ireland, and prepared the way for its ultimate removal. Of the probable result of those divisions, so far as Parliamentary action in the present session is concerned, it is not necessary to speak, and mere speculation would be useless. But their effect on the public mind has already been as decided as it has been salutary. In Ireland they have been as a rainbow in the sky; giving promise of security hitherto unknown, and encouraging the Irish people to seek for the removal of their grievances by the renewal of constitutional agitation. The action of Parliament has, indeed, increased the alarm of timid Episcopalians, but it has disposed bolder and more sagacious minds to make preparation for an inevitable event. In this country there have been witnessed analogous results; for while, on the one hand, the depths of passion and of prejudice have been stirred by the unscrupulous, the more thoughtful adherents of the Establishment are discussing the details of disestablishment and disendowment with a thoroughness which helps to strip the proposal of its terrors, and will tend to facilitate the changes which it involves. Whether it be true, or not, that the severance of Church and State in Ireland will inevitably be followed by a like event in this country, it has become evident that insistance on the fact, by substituting definite conceptions for vague apprehension, is, in a remarkable degree, tending to hasten the catastrophe which it is intended to avert. It cannot save the Irish Establishment; but it will prepare the way for the abandonment of the English Establishment also. Nor will passionate appeals to the Protestant feelings of the English people be of much avail, when urged by the supporters of a Government which avows its desire to grant a charter to a Catholic University, and to endow the Catholic clergy with the money of the State. When the conviction becomes general that there is no alternative between endowing all churches in Ireland, and endowing none of them, those whose love of Protestantism exceeds their zeal for Establishments will cease to deprecate disestablishment, as fatal to the interests of truth.

The present condition of the English Establishment was then referred to; it being asserted that the spectacle presented by that Church at this moment is one which no Christian man can contemplate without concern; while there are but few of its own members to whom it does not give inexpressible pain. Happily Churchmen have shown an increasing disposition to refer to their real cause the evils of which they complain, and to look for a remedy in the only direction in which it can be found.

In their survey of recent occurrences, as well as in their anticipations of the future, the committee are profoundly impressed, not merely with the magnitude of their enterprise, but with the special demands which are now made upon all who engage in it. Earnestness, patience, and self-sacrifice—these will be as needful now as in less auspicious days; but these alone will not suffice. Those who would witness the triumph of the principles of willinghood and equality have now to display constructive skill, as well as destructive energy—to grapple with practical difficulties, which present themselves even in the very accomplishment of their object—to adapt their movements, with supple readiness, to rapidly changing circumstances, and to manifest a spirit of moderation which will best repel the accusations of which, for some time to come, they will continue to be the subjects. To assume, as some have lately seemed to assume, that the conflict has ended, and that it remains only to gather in the fruits of victory, is to invite discomfiture, which would be well deserved. In regard even to the Irish Establishment there can be no final struggle until the great issue has been raised at a general election, which has yet to come; and some recent incidents have indicated the kind of weapons with which the opponents of that Establishment are likely to be then assailed. There are also large numbers of our fellow-countrymen who, now invested with the franchise, have to be induced to use their power, not for selfish, but for noble and patriotic ends; and among these the work of education and of organisation has to be carried on with combined vigour and discretion. Other and yet more-carefully chosen modes of procedure will be called for in connection with hitherto firm, but now doubting, supporters of national Establishments. To remove their misconceptions and to allay their fears, to show sympathy with them in their perplexities, and to encourage their tentative efforts to deliver themselves from thraldom—these are duties which will call into requisition all the Christian feeling, and all the practical sagacity, of the friends of voluntaryism, and on the faithful discharge of which the early, or the distant, fulfilment of their hopes will greatly depend.

The executive committee devoutly thank God and take courage, as to-day they rejoice in the signal success which has attended their past labour; but they do not conceal from themselves the fact, that that success is largely attributable to those arrangements of Divine Providence in accordance with which the course of public events has given new force to their arguments, and afforded unlooked-for facilities for their work. They, in connection with their supporters, have, year by year, patiently watched for, and diligently availed themselves of, opportunities for the effective assertion of their principles, either by way of advocacy, or by means of practical legislation. They have had their reward in results, sometimes, no doubt, inconsiderable, but, taken in the aggregate, great, solid, and enduring. With the same fidelity, with equal watchfulness, and with a deeper sense of responsibility, it will become them to labour still—cheered by the light now shining on their path, but yet waiting for the brightness of the perfect day. The victories which they now celebrate are but trumpet-calls to new fields of warfare, on which the conflict must be again and again renewed, until the cause of truth and justice has achieved its final triumph. Loud applause followed the reading of the report.

Mr. E. S. ROBINSON, of Bristol, moved the first resolution, which was as follows:—

That the Conference, in receiving and adopting the report of the executive committee and the treasurer's account now presented, expresses its devout gratitude to God for the recent unprecedented advance of public sentiment in the direction of the Society's aims. Congratulating the executive committee on the possession of increased pecuniary resources, and on the satisfactory results of their Parliamentary labours, it expresses the hope that the Society's supporters will avail themselves of the opportunities afforded by the course of public events for pursuing with unrelaxed energy the object for which the Society was established.

He said: I was present in 1844 at the formation of the first conference of this Society, and I have been looking over this assembly and trying to contrast it with that and with other conferences at which I have been present during the last four-and-twenty years. I rejoice to say that I have had strength, and I am happy to say I have had will, to be present not only at the conferences, but at every meeting of the council that has been held too. I was thinking, Sir, who I could recollect as having been present at some of the earlier meetings of this Society, and prominent among those, sir, I recollect yourself. (Applause.) Then there was our friend the Rev. Howard Hinton; then there was those who have passed from us, and I mention with reverence the names of Dr. Cox and Dr. Price, the Rev. John Barnett, and Dr. Wardlaw. Many here have a distinct recollection of those men, and it will be a subject of great congratulation to those who recollect the time I allude to, and it will be a matter of congratulation to all the young men who do not recollect it, to see one of the veterans of the cause in the chair at this moment. Of course in naming these I do not attempt to mention all who are worthy of high praise, and I have not named Mr. Miall, for, as a matter of course, he is always there and always ready. I have never seen such an audience as this, such a truly representative audience. I may say so in the fullest sense of the

word. Well, you said, Sir, that the first note to be sounded on this occasion was one of congratulation. There is no doubt of it; but then the most enthusiastic supporter of the Liberation Society does not say or assume for a moment that to the Liberation Society only is due the position in which the question of Church Establishments exists at this moment. We do not argue, we do not assume, we do not affect anything of the kind. As the report properly says, we attribute it very largely to Divine Providence. But we should be doing injustice to the Liberation Society, injustice to the editor of that newspaper which has been of such signal service in the cause, if we did not attribute to a very great extent of our success to the teachings, the indoctrinisation which has been given by that paper in teaching the great principles that this Society holds. Now, this is a serious subject; it is a serious Society; and I believe that the object of all who are earnest in support of this Society, that the fundamental, the main, the permanent, the momentous subject is the spread of religion, the spread of Divine truth, religion in the heart, the doctrines and truths of the New Testament, and the spreading, as far as possible, of the assimilation of man's life to the life of Christ. I believe this is our main and substantial end in this business. When people are arguing in reference to establishments and endowments and voluntaryism they want an illustration. Men who can bring forward illustrations well are the most forcible reasoners. There is no doubt about that. Dry logic does not do altogether without an illustration or two. Well, then, men talk about a free church and a free State; they point to America; they point to our colonies as illustrations of the success of a free Church in a free State. Yes, but then men who do not hold the opinions that you and I hold—(I daresay most of us hold something like the same sentiments in these matters)—say "Yes, that is not a fair illustration." They say, "Yes, yes, that is true, but then we do not want to Americanise our institutions. You know, it won't do to apply the principles that seem to succeed so well in Australia, in Canada, and in the United States, to an old country with its ancient traditions and prejudices such as Great Britain." Now, what I say is, if you can destroy the Irish Church Establishment, if you can have in Ireland, as an integral part of Great Britain, a free Church and a free State, you will have something to point to as illustrative of the beneficial results of the disestablishment of religion and of the separation of Church and State. You know at this time the Catholic religion is established in France and many of the European States. In Russia you have the Greek Church established, in Scotland you have the Presbyterian Church, and in England you have the Protestant Episcopalian Church, and you have it in Ireland too; but if you can disestablish it in Ireland, and it should succeed in promoting peace and good will and religion there, you will be able to point to a free Church and a free State in one of the old European monarchies. There is just one word in the report which I could not help noticing, and I like that part of it uncommonly, because you know we have got a little bit of the ancient Briton about us. We like to respect vested interests, and we will respect vested interests. The report says we mean to disclain all hard bargaining and all rigorous exactions. So we do. We mean to stick to that, and we mean to impress that upon all audiences that we come before, and to show them that while we want to promote religion by disendowing and disestablishing it, it will be with the purest and highest motive, and with no intention to benefit ourselves or pecuniarily injure anybody else.

The Rev. T. HOWARD HINTON, of Reading, said: In rising to second the adoption of the report and treasurer's account, permit me in a sentence or two to express the very great pleasure with which I attend this Conference. I had the honour of assisting at the nativity of the Liberation Society. I am one of those who rocked it in its cradle, and I rejoice to the very bottom of my heart to see the stout fellow to which it has now grown. It has never done anything in all the years of its life to forfeit or diminish my regard for it. I come now, I confess, rather as a spectator than as a labourer, and the more earnestly, for I come from the neighbouring town of Reading, thinking it may perhaps be the last time that I shall have an opportunity of witnessing such a gathering. That is not an unnatural thought for a man in the seventy-eighth year of his age. Some old men have gone before me from this field. It cannot be long before I shall join them, but, Sir and gentlemen, we shall be still spectators of the fight, and I do not think it will be unworthy of our position then to sympathise in its triumph. (Loud applause.)

Mr. BAINES, M.P., said: I rejoice to be present at this meeting, and I rejoice in the great advances which have been made by this Society. We cannot speak of great triumphs as being yet gained in the cause of religious liberty and equality, but we can speak with complacency and with gratitude of the great advances made in every department of religious liberty and equality. Without travelling again over the ground which had been with such signal ability passed over in the report, I will just present to you one single view that may show how great, how general has been the advance of our principle in the legislation of the country. I will take a subject on which at one time I was a controversialist,—I mean the subject of education,—not for the sake of entering into any controversy here or touching any point on which we shall not all be united; but let me just draw your attention to the fact of how the rights of conscience are acknowledged in every department of education, so far as the Legislature has occasion to touch it, elementary, middle-class, and highest class university education. In regard to elementary education a bill is now before Parliament which in two points must be approved of by the friends of religious liberty; first, in that it renders necessary a conscience clause for schools receiving the public money; and secondly, in that it dissociates from the necessary and compulsory connection with religion the great work of secular education. Then, with regard to middle-class education, a report has just been issued by the Schools' Enquiry Commission making very important recommendations upon that score. It recommends, for instance, that the trusts of most of the endowed schools shall be no longer confined to members of the Church of England, but shall be thrown open to all denominations. (Applause.) It recommends that the head master shall no longer necessarily be a clergyman of the Church of England. (Applause.) It recommends that a conscience clause of the widest and most satisfactory kind shall be enforced in every school which enjoys an endowment, and which, therefore, is properly brought under the influence of our courts and of our Legislature. Then, with regard to the highest class of education, the Universities, the report of this Society has shown what great and signal advances have been made towards the admission of Dissenters to the highest seats of education in England, perhaps I may say in the world. Now, I need not allude to the other branches, in which a still greater advance is making in regard to our principle. The Irish Church is now admitted universally by statesmen of the Liberal party, and by a very large portion of the community of England, to be a scandal that no longer can be endured. I congratulate my friend Sir John Gray, who is to speak upon that subject. Still more I congratulate my friend Mr. Miall, who, years before, in a speech of unsurpassed ability, and quite exhaustive of the argument on this subject, brought forward this question in the House of Commons. They have lived indeed to see the approach, as I trust, of a great and signal triumph of the cause of civil justice and of religious liberty. We are here with pride and lift up our faces before the world because we know that we seek nothing but with the most imperfect impartiality, with the most absolute disinterestedness; that we ourselves have no object of our own to seek after or to attain, but that all we want is for our fellow-countrymen in Ireland that justice which for centuries has been denied them, and that justice which, when attained, will tend to concord, peace, and harmony. (Loud applause.) On the subject of Church-rates, I believe that we now are also on the eve of a triumph; but there, too, I must not say that we have made achievements as yet. Much as has been done by this Society by its most indefatigable and most able exertions, continued through a long series of years, we still have only advanced through one House the bill for the abolition of compulsory Church-rates. I trust, however, that the majorities have been so great, and the declarations of the Liberal party now so unanimous upon the subject, that we cannot reasonably apprehend any possibility of ultimate difficulty. I will only add one sentiment, and that is, that as we are conscious of objects the most disinterested, the most impartial, the most patriotic and national in their scope and extent, so now in the time of comparative advance and prosperity and success we should display that moderation which I believe will tend most to secure the objects, and especially to secure that great object, of the prevalence and triumph of truth, peace, concord, and harmony which we seek for from the achievement of the particular objects which we have set before us. I know that there is a temptation, a natural temptation, to the use of terms of exultation and great triumph, and of strong, possibly even of violent, language. Allow me to offer my very humble and most respectful advice to all those who are looking forward to a general election, to avoid everything that can offend even the taste, much more the feelings, of the men who differ from us. Let us acknowledge most cheerfully their rights of freedom of conscience and of judgment as we claim the same admission for ourselves, but let us nevertheless carry on the contest which we have still before us in all its departments, for we have still to move on the whole line of religious freedom and advance. Let us carry on the contest in a way that we shall not be ashamed of, with calmness and with firmness—with courage, unflinching courage, if you please, but remembering that calmness and firmness are often of much more importance than an impulsive courage, and do not let us attempt to grasp too much. (Cheers.)

Sir JOHN BOWRING said: Mr. Chairman and gentlemen, as I appear on this platform for the first time, I am grateful to you for giving me an opportunity of uttering a few words. I, like the reverend gentleman who has lately addressed you, have passed into the fourth quarter of a century, and I feel that when a small fragment of life only is left to us, there is imposed upon us a great responsibility to use that fragment wisely and well. (Applause.) The times in which we live, and the marvellous events which have been associated with those times, have called me and other men from their solitude, and imposed upon us the necessity of doing what we are able to advance the great cause triumphing and about to triumph yet more. Our ancestors heard and re-echoed noble words—"Religious liberty;" a grander word still is gone forth, and we can repeat it with more enthusiastic echoes—"Religious equality." (Loud applause.) Those are words which we shall have to inscribe upon our banners, and by that test, and that test alone, will be judged the purposes of legislation. Sir, congratulation was a very becoming word to be introduced into that remarkable, that that eloquent, that irresistible report. (Applause.) But, in my mind, there are some other associations, melancholy reflections upon the improbity of public men. (Hear, hear.) Sir, the time was when we looked to the antecedents of those who were coming forward as champions in the field of political discussion, and from their antecedents we ventured to anticipate the position they would occupy. But, Sir, the conversions of the present day are wonderfully marvellous. (Laughter.) All the ancient Sauls of Tarsus are becoming Saint Pauls, and we are marching, it seems, to Damascus together. (Roars of laughter.) Gentlemen, it has been said again and again that no arguments have been brought forward in favour of the Irish Church. It is the great ignominy of England that such a state of things should have been allowed to exist so long. Sir, your association may well congratulate itself on its work, and they who deserve the fame shall have the praise. I have heard the Church of England called the White Swan of Protestantism, but I venture to say that if that white swan form an intercourse with the black cygnet of the Irish Church, he will not be a very daring prophet who declares and anticipates the downfall of both. (Prolonged cheers.)

Mr. JOHN J. CORDEROY said he was a member of the Old Conference Wesleyan Methodist body, and had been for many years what was called a political Dissenter. He had been for many years a diligent and careful, and he hoped, to some extent, thoughtful and edified student of the *Nonconformist* newspaper. In that and other papers he had often seen criticisms upon the religious body to which he belonged—criticisms and remarks, which, however well intended, bore rather severely, and he must confess he had often hoped that the time might come when, on behalf of himself and of thousands of old Wesleyan Methodists, he might be able to utter a few words in regard to this great question. He could assure those friends who were not familiar with the sentiments of the old Wesleyan body that although they had been occasionally on the Church-rate question before committees of the House of Lords misrepresented, yet there were, through the length and breadth of the land, thousands upon thousands of the Old Conference members who were most heartily and thoroughly in sympathy with the Liberation Society. (Cheers.)

The Rev. Mr. LAW asked when and where Mr. Gladstone repudiated endowments? The last utterance of Mr. Gladstone on the subject was in the House of Commons recently, when, instead of any such repudiation, he told the House that after the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland there would remain the churches, the rectories (or what Scotchmen called the manses), the vicarages, and other appendages, making altogether something like two-thirds of the whole value of the Church property, which would remain in possession of the Episcopal Church.

Mr. E. MIALL (who was received with loud and prolonged applause) said: I am sorry for the occasion that has called me up just now. The proposition which Mr. Law has mentioned will never be recalled, simply because if Mr. Gladstone carries out the plan which was suggested by this Society long before Mr. Gladstone took it in hand, the result will be that in consulting personal and life interests and in satisfying the demands of real property, in giving over the Church buildings and edifices to the Protestant Episcopalian Church in Ireland, and in making those other small arrangements which are necessary to ease the transition from one period to another, Mr. Gladstone will have done precisely what he says he will do—viz., he will have given to the Protestant Episcopalian Church, or rather *for* that Church in Ireland, for the purposes of this exchange, a value which if capitalised would equal the amount of between three-fifths and two-thirds of its present capitalised income. Now, I do not think that the mode in which Mr. Gladstone has put that forward is quite in harmony with his usual clearness on financial questions. (Hear, hear.) I have not the smallest doubt of the fact that if the Irish Church were gone to-morrow, and if we proceeded to give the capital value of all the life interests we were determined to satisfy, we should be spending money equal to about three-fifths of the present pecuniary value of the Church. At so many years' purchase every actuary would tell you this would be about the value they would offer for the income—I mean the parochial income arising out of rent-charges to be enjoyed by this generation of the clergy. But after this generation is gone—(loud applause)—the rent-charges remain where they are to be appropriated as Parliament may direct. Nothing, in point of fact, is given to the Church as a Church. (Applause.) Everything is given to individuals as individuals to satisfy their life interests, in the interest of justice, and I ask anybody who does not look with a prejudiced eye upon Mr. Gladstone's movements, and who has no strong feeling of opposition to him, to look over his speeches during the last two months, and tell me that Mr. Gladstone has not avowed before the whole of this country, and is not understood by the whole of this country, to pledge himself to the principle of disendowment. Why, the whole of the opposition which he meets with proceeds upon that assumption, and although he may endeavour to show that he is making a change far less in its magnitude than some people accuse him of making, everybody will understand, I think, who has fairly read the debates, that when that bill passes—which I hope will pass in the first reformed Parliament—by which the Church of Ireland shall be disestablished—due regard being paid to all life and personal interests—when that is the case, I believe that the whole country will recognise in the result this fact, that the tap-root has been cut, and though the Church may live through this generation—I mean as an Establishment—because the clergy will not all die off at once—(laughter)—nor do we want them to—(applause)—yet the process will have been taken which will destroy the Establishment as an endowed Church—as a nationally endowed Church—and will throw the Protestant Episcopalians of Ireland upon their own

resources. I think it very important that the country should understand that Mr. Gladstone's proposal, so far as it is made known to the country, however he may describe it, in all its essential features corresponds exactly with the demands which this Society has always made.

The CHAIRMAN: Permit me just to say that one of the wisest features in the measure that Mr. Gladstone is proposing appears to me to be his not mixing up the disestablishment question with the disendowment question. Let us first get rid of the establishment principle, and get the money in the hands of the State, and we shall know what to do with it.

The motion for the adoption of the report and treasurer's account was then put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

DUNCAN MCLAREN, Esq., M.P. for Edinburgh, moved the second resolution, viz.:—

That the Conference rejoices at the triumphant and repeated majorities by which the House of Commons has resolved that "it is necessary that the Established Church of Ireland should cease to exist as an Establishment, due regard being had to all personal interests and all individual rights of property." It desires to express warm admiration of the decision and earnestness displayed by Mr. Gladstone in the realisation of so important a result, as well as the hope that the policy which he has initiated will be strenuously supported by all the friends of religious equality, not only at the present time, but when the question is remitted to the country for its decision, at the approaching general election.

With regard to the expression of admiration of Mr. Gladstone, no tribute could be better merited. The earnestness and energy and zeal and vigour with which Mr. Gladstone pursued everything that he took up reminded one of the spirit which animated the prophets of old and some of our early Reformers in the religious world. One could not hear him speak on any question of this kind in which you did not see how unlike he was to the most of other men who mingled much in the political world, and who seemed in their speeches to be dexterously sailing here, there, and everywhere, through quicksands and shoals, trying to land on some other point afar off, and accomplish some purpose not clearly avowed. When Mr. Gladstone took up any question he went at it with a will, and if confidence were placed in him it would be found that he had followed a straightforward course, and succeeded in gaining, with the assistance of public opinion, the object at which he aimed. He (Mr. Duncan McLaren) could not help mentioning a very remarkable statement made by Mr. Disraeli the previous night in the House of Commons. In one of the most dexterous speeches that perhaps ever was delivered, he gave as one grand reason for objecting to the disendowment of the Church of Ireland, and still more of the Church of England, that an Established Church was necessary to preserve and perpetuate the true religion, and prevent the great Leviathan, the Pope, from swallowing up all the various sects. (Laughter.) This was certainly a most extraordinary argument when it was considered that though the Church of Rome rarely, if ever, gained proselytes amongst Dissenters, they went over in shoals from the Established Episcopal Church. (Cheers.)

The Rev. C. H. SPURGEON seconded the resolution, and in doing so he said he felt that he had no right to occupy the honourable position which he then did, because he seemed to have come into the affair so late in the day, and all the honours lawfully belonged to those grave and reverend seigneurs who had aforetime done good service to the Society. Still, the battle of Waterloo was drawing to a close, and if any of them could come in at the end, like Blucher, they might help the others, and wear some of the laurels after all. Some gentlemen present, who had been members of the Society from the commencement, must lately have felt that they had realised the words of the Lord which he sent by His prophet—"I will work a work in your day which ye would not believe even if a man were to say it unto you." When they woke up one fine morning, and found that Mr. Gladstone had moved his resolutions, they must have looked to their almanacks to see whether they had not been, like the famous Ephesian sleepers, sleeping for fifty years at the least, and when they really found that they had been awake, their first spontaneous impression must have been to cast themselves on their knees before the Eternal Providence, and thank Him for what had been done. (Cheers.) Altogether, apart from these resolutions, the Society had wonderful power in the land. It was said of Richard Cœur de Lion that his exploits became so famous that the Saracen mothers threatened their naughty children that they would give them over to him. (Laughter.) So, he had frequently seen in the Ritualistic prints the threat to the Evangelical infants that if they did not behave themselves they would certainly be handed over to that dreadful Liberation Society, whose teeth were iron, and whose stomach was as an iron cauldron, and to be handed over to whose tender mercies was analogous to being received into the infernal regions themselves. (Laughter and cheers.) The success which the Society had achieved was due to the purity of its principles and the wonderful skill with which it had been conducted. They might congratulate themselves on the position they had attained; but he thought it was very probable that there might be considerable delay before the matter now in hand was actually carried out. They did not disguise, whatever others might do, the object they had in view, which was the disestablishment of all churches; and he thanked God that the conductors of that Society had never been reticent about what they intended to do, for, having avowed their intentions, they could go on in the straightforward course of honesty, and they might depend upon it that, in the long run, that man would succeed who scorned policy and followed principle. If he were a friend of the Established Church, he would recommend the supporters of that Church to close the question as soon as possible; for albeit that the wise and moderate propositions of Mr. Gladstone would now be agreed to, yet there were some who felt that those propositions were quite generous enough, and for his own part he thought quite enough was given by them. He did not see the particular right of any man to the next presentation. He considered the whole bargain of the Irish Church as formed at the union of Great Britain and Ireland to have been a most villanous one, and contrary to the natural principles of justice. (Cheers.) If the Irish clergy were turned into the streets tomorrow it would be only the act of stern justice with its naked sword avenging the past. But at present they counselled leniency, which was a great compromise, though the time might soon come when the day for compromise would be passed. He only said this as a warning to those who wished to prolong the discussion, inasmuch as they would heve nothing to gain by delay; whereas, the friends of the Society would have everything to gain by it. The resolution spoke of Mr. Gladstone, and he wished that for once in his life he could be eloquent so as to speak of Mr. Gladstone as he deserved. When they differed from him they respected him, because they always believed him to be honest, and that without touching the tricks of politics or turning aside to the tortuous ways of policy, he went straight on in the path which he believed to be right. Were Mr. Gladstone at present at the head of the party who defended the Irish Church, he would command the highest esteem of every gentleman present. They did not praise him because he was on their side—though they felicitated themselves upon that fact—but because they believed him to be thorough in his honesty and in his determination to carry out his convictions. If it would not be wrong to do so, he would ask them at once to give three cheers for Mr. Gladstone. (Upon this the large meeting rose *en masse* and gave three enthusiastic cheers for Mr. Gladstone.) Mr. Spurgeon continued:—The point upon which Mr. Gladstone was so constantly attacked only provoked their laughter. It was said, "Oh, but he has such an irritable temper." That Mr. Gladstone had a temper was a mercy for them all. A man who had no principles, but could veer round with every wind, might well put on a placid smile and never have a temper; but a man of principle must be angry against everything that was shifty and tricky. He had heard of persons who were easy as old shoes, and such people were generally worth about as much. They had heard enough of coming into the House of Commons with a sprig in one's mouth, and of gentlemen asserting that they did not feel a weight of responsibility when they really ought to feel it, considering that they had the affairs of a nation upon them. He considered that Mr. Gladstone did regulate his temper exceedingly well, considering the wonderful irritation he had to endure, and the possession of such a temper, so far from being wrong, was perhaps one of the qualifications for the position he now occupied. He took Mr. Gladstone, for all in all, as being one of the noblest Englishmen alive, and hoped that God would long support him. The fight which they had before them would be a long one, for the intense stupidity of a certain party in the nation would require a long time to be dealt with; but he hoped the day would come when everything like Episcopal, or even Protestant, ascendancy would be cast to the winds, and the whole work of the Society would be done in the name of God and of truth. (Applause.) They must especially take care of the next election. He was not so sanguine, having made some inquiries on the subject, as some were as to all the new voters being on their side, considering the influences which at such times were at work, and if they were too sanguine they might find that the "leap in the dark" would be a leap into the dark for them indeed. They must take care that at the next election the one cry must be "Religious Equality," and he would ask even teetotal advocates and others to postpone their measures until afterwards, being sure that such measures could then be carried. Even with regard to the Sunday trading and closing question, he would say, "Emancipate a people who could keep the Sunday," before they went to that question. He would himself give a vote to no man, even though he were the best Liberal in all other respects, unless he subscribed to this. He would specially exhort all ministers present, if they would allow him, to indoctrinate their people with right principles on this matter, teaching them that the kingdom of Christ was not of this world, but was spiritual, and to go to the polling-booth and record their votes in the name of Christ and His cause. Specially was it the duty of them all to vindicate the voluntary principle which they professed. Voluntaryism might not have done all it could or should do: but one of the reasons for this was that the people who practised it were burdened with the incubus of having to support the ministers of the State Church. One of his own deacons had told him that morning that he had to pay 180*l.* a year in tithes to two parishes, and that there was a poor man in his employment, who was a Primitive Methodist, who was acknowledged by Church people themselves to do more good than the two clergymen whom the master helped to support. He hoped that they would keep the voluntary principle going with greater earnestness than ever they had done before. He believed there was a bright and glorious future in the dawning, and he hoped they would live to meet and sing Hallelujahs of praise to God, when there should be not only a free Church in a free State, but a Church that was really a Church because it owned Christ for its head, followed Christ's teachings, carried those teachings out in Christ's spirit, and scorned to tamper with the kings and princes of the world. (Enthusiastic cheers.)

Sir JOHN GRAY, M.P., in rising to support the motion, after a warm eulogium on Mr. Spurgeon, said the question of the Irish Church had now passed beyond the region of statistics. It was no longer a money question, but one of principle,—should they have religious equality or still have religious ascendancy. Although a member of the Established Church, he felt himself degraded by the position which the Church had occupied in Ireland, and he also felt that England, her people, and her Government, were degraded, too, by the position in which they had allowed it so long to remain. He, however, now believed that this country was about to wipe out the stain once and for ever, and that henceforth the degradation of ascendancy would never curse the Church of Christ, nor oppress a country which was ready, if treated with justice and equity, to give the hand of fellowship to England, to forget the past, and to enter into a brotherly union for the greatness of the empire, the security of the throne, and the honour of this country. (Cheers.) He knew, personally, that Mr. Gladstone was as anxious for the disendowment of the Church in Ireland as he was for the disestablishment.

Mr. B. WHITWORTH, M.P., said that ought to be a proud day for the Liberation Society. He trusted the division the other night was a fair precursor of what would be the fate of the Established Church in this country. He had been surprised that Liberal members had not looked at this question fairly in the face. As a Protestant, he looked at the disestablishment of the Church as one of the most excellent things for Protestantism that could be devised. He believed another ten years would bring the English Church as near to disestablishment as was the Irish Church. (Cheers.)

Sir FRANCIS CROSSLEY, M.P., said he had had the honour of a seat in the House of Commons for upwards of sixteen years, and he had quietly and steadily supported every measure that had been brought forward, and that had received the support of the Liberation Society. He believed religion to be far too sacred a thing to be dealt with by men selected not because of their religious opinions, but on account of their requisite qualifications in other respects. He had been in favour of Catholic emancipation and the admission of Jews to Parliament, but he certainly should not think either good Catholics or good Jews calculated to appoint good bishops of the Church of England. (Laughter.) He considered true religion, which was of far more value than the mere livings, would be benefited by being left to the people, while the State attended to its own affairs. Mr. Spurgeon had alluded to a subject which was sometimes thrown into the teeth of those who were in favour of free religion—"How badly you pay some of your ministers." They might turn round upon the Church of England—"How badly you pay some of your curates." (Applause.) To those who would support the disendowment of the Irish Church, but feared that the English Church would next be attacked, he would say, "Do justly and fear not." (Cheers.)

The resolution was carried unanimously.

Mr. HENRY LEE (of Manchester) proposed,

That, inasmuch as the bill of Mr. Gladstone abolishing compulsory rates is in accordance with the principles of the Society, the Conference approves of the course pursued by the executive committee in relation to the measure, and expresses satisfaction at the unanimity with which it has been passed by the House of Commons. Nevertheless, the Conference is of opinion that, in the event of the bill being either rejected, or seriously altered, by the Upper House of Parliament, it will be the duty of abolitionists to exert themselves to the utmost to ensure the passing, in a new Parliament, of Mr. Hardcastle's Bill for the entire extinction of Church-rates.

He said there were times when they were called upon to prepare the ground; that had been done. There were times to sow the seed; that also had been accomplished. There were times to watch the growth of the principles the seed of which they had cast into the ground; that was their present duty. They should watch the progress of their principles, and nurture them into something like power and fertility, and then the time for rejoicing would also be theirs.

The Rev. WILLIAM BROCK seconded the resolution. He said he had once a call from an Archdeacon who threatened to confine him in Norwich Castle unless he promptly paid his Church-rates,—an honour which not many would boast of. He devoutly and earnestly hoped that the select committee of the House of Lords would strangle Mr. Gladstone's bill. (Laughter.) He had never in his life rejoiced more than when he saw that Earl Russell had consented to the committee, because he was quite sure nothing but total abolition would meet the requirements of the case. It was all very well to say, "Oh, let us retain the machinery." He had seen enough of village life in England to know what the working of the machinery would be, and what influence "my lord" or "my lady" could bring to bear upon the grocer who happened to be a Dissenter. (Cheers.) Nothing but an absolute sweep of the whole thing would do; name, machinery, policemen, Norwich Castle, and archidiaconal powers, all must go. (Laughter and cheers.) This was a wonderful week for London and for English ecclesiasticism. There was a great meeting of the bishops, with the Archbishop of Canterbury in the chair, in another hall, and London was placarded all over with announcements that that meeting was to defend the great principle of the connection between Church and State. He thanked God that the archbishop and bishops had been brought to that. (Cheers.) When the founders of the Liberation Society first met at the Crown and Anchor, nobody would have ventured to suggest that those who were then present would live to meet in the same week in which there would be a meeting of bishops practically to counterwork the Liberation Society. He honoured those who had called the meeting to defend the connection between Church and State. Let them say all that could be said for it, and then let the Liberation Society deal

with their defence, and when Greek met Greek then would come the tug of war. (Loud cheers.) He should not wonder if they next had a deputation from some such meeting as that of the bishops, to one similar to that which he was addressing. (Laughter.) He believed all this great change had been brought about by the quiet, steadfast enouncement of their principles year in and year out, through evil report and through good report. When he sat on the platform at the Crown and Anchor at the first meeting of the Society, he received a letter from a gentleman connected with the House of Lords, warning him that Sir Robert Peel was considering whether or not he might pounce upon him for the plans which they were organising, and all manner of appeals were made to him, to his sense of safety, to his sense of respectability, and to his sense of usefulness. But still he joined the Liberation Society. (Loud applause.)

The resolution was carried unanimously.

Mr. ROBERT KELL (of Bradford), proposed,—

That the constitution of the Society, as now read, be adopted as its constitution for the ensuing three years.

Mr. JOHN MATTHEWS (of Aberystwith), seconded the resolution. The constitution was then adopted.

Mr. MASON JONES very briefly supported the motion, after which the Conference adjourned to dinner.

SECOND SITTING.—TUESDAY EVENING.

The chair was taken at six o'clock by Thomas Barnes, Esq., M.P. The large hall in which the Conference was held was as well filled as at the morning sitting.

The CHAIRMAN, in opening the proceedings, said that he wished to unite with the meeting in an expression of devout gratitude for the position in which the Society and the object it had in view stood in the public mind. Until the last twelve or eighteen months they certainly looked like those who had been beating the air or threshing water. They had from time to time made a momentary impression, but it apparently lasted only as long as the matter was fresh in the public mind. At last, however, it seemed that, contrary to expectation, the harvest has come all at once, and was now being gathered in, not scantily, but in armfulls. They must all be thankful to see the great and rapid progress which their views and opinions had made of late, and the position which they now occupied in the public mind. It was certainly a noteworthy occurrence that Mr. Miall was, on a recent occasion, quoted in the House of Commons as the great authority. (Cheers.) He was the lion of the evening. The whole work, however, was not yet done. There were remaining difficulties which needed to be contended with, with as much determination as had been displayed in former years. This Society was not like an ordinary political society, composed of men who were seeking office, and whose mouths might be stopped by giving them a sop. It was composed of men were determined to accomplish the end they had in view; and no bribe or sop or offer would ever close their mouths until that had been attained. The question of releasing religion from alliance with the State had not been taken up as a mere political question, but as one affecting the interests of religion; and as such it would be continued. It had been difficult for the promoters of the Society to convince the world of that fact. Many of them had been looked upon as mere enemies to the Established Church. It was their purpose to go on actuated by the same motives as before, and to continue their operations until they saw religion liberated from all the trammels of the state and from all the influences of political party and political power. (Cheers.)

The Rev. LLEWELYN BEVAN, B.A., moved the first resolution, which was as follows:—

That the Conference regards with the liveliest interest the successful endeavours of the executive committee to secure the co-operation of young men in the advocacy of the Society's principles; that it recommends a continuance of such efforts, and expresses an earnest desire that the organisations originated by the movement may, by their zeal and perseverance, fulfil the hopes which their formation has excited.

He said that, perhaps, one of the most interesting departments of the movements of this Society was the movement amongst the young men of the country. That movement had been started for the further discussion of Free Church principles amongst those who already held those principles, and for the conviction of those who held to the principles of the Establishment. It was a burning shame, but it was a great fact, that there were Dissenters who did not understand the principles on which they dissented from the State Church; and many young people in Nonconformist communities were growing up untaught by their ministers why they belonged to the Free Church of the land. It was only right that those who had the teaching of them with regard to spiritual things should also give them lessons as to the great principles of Church polity on which Nonconformity was based. More enlightenment on that subject would render needless the complaint that young men as they grew up went over to the Established Church. It was time that they should be induced to give up the idea that to go to church was more respectable than to be a Dissenter, and they should be shown that their action in that respect should be guided by considerations of a higher kind. The passion for place and position was being very sadly illustrated in the history of the House of Commons at the present time. He should be sorry to see the religious life of England follow its political life. The leader of the House of Commons had recently said that English politics were descending to a depth of degradation unequalled in modern times. It was one object of this Society to prevent the religion of the country from falling to the same depth. The young men's conferences which had been held about the country had been attended not only by free church men, but also by members of the Establishment. The promoters were quite willing to hear what others had to say in opposition to them. Their principles were not of a hothouse type, and they were not afraid to try them. If they had a fair field for the discussion of those principles amongst the young men both of Dissenting churches and the Establishment, much would be done towards the realisation of that hope with which the resolution closed—the earnest desire that the organisations originated by the movement might, by their zeal and perseverance, fulfil the hope which their formation had excited. (Applause.)

The Rev. Dr. LANDELS, in seconding the resolution, said that, with others, he felt that there was yet much work remaining to be done. Still, he could not but feel that the heaviest part of the work had been done. The stone had been rolled nearly to the summit of the hill: there was, perhaps, a little of the shoulder of the mountain remaining to be passed, and, possibly, a little table land after that, over which it would roll with very little effort; but then would come the descent, when its own momentum would carry it on most triumphantly. The resolution before the meeting commended itself very powerfully to him because it referred to the young. He could not feel very well pleased that the children of Nonconformists went off to a Church which, by its rank, prestige, and wealth, attracted them to itself. There was a great work to be done among young men in connection with liberation efforts. He wished to see them thoroughly indoctrinated in the principles of the Society, and trained to understand why they should attend the free Churches of the land rather than the Established Church. They should be taught from the beginning that religion was a purely personal and spiritual thing, that Christ was the Head of the Church, and that to recognise any other authority there was infidelity to Him. He believed that by the efforts made during the past winter a very large amount of good seed had been sown, and that the way had been prepared for a wider diffusion of Nonconformist principles. The present was a most favourable time for appealing to young people. If there was any way of exciting the sympathies of young men, it was the setting before them of noble and chivalrous examples; and certainly this movement was never more fortunately situated in that respect than it was at the present time. At its head in the House of Commons was William Ewart Gladstone, one of the broadest-minded statesmen, and a man of the loftiest and purest principle, that England ever had taking part in the management of its political affairs. (Loud applause.) He was a man who would be an honour to any nation, and of whom England might well be proud. He was now seconded—perhaps once educated—certainly led on, by one whose name could not but be mentioned with the utmost respect and affection in an assembly like the present—a man whose reputation was just as *bright* as his name. (Prolonged cheering for Mr. Bright, the company all rising.) These were two of the ablest and greatest men among English members of Parliament, and he might say English statesmen; for, strange to say, the old Conservatives were beginning to discover that John Bright was a statesman, though they questioned whether William Gladstone was. And then the movement had a friend who was not in the House of Commons now, but who, it was to be hoped, would be there before long, a man whose name was synonymous with consistency and firmness and moderation, and made the pulses of young men beat high every time it was mentioned. This was their friend Mr. Edward Miall. (Loud cheering, the audience rising as before.) Mr. Miall and his coadjutors were like men attempting to remove a mountain. They had been long at work with pick and spade in hand, and, though it had not yet been cast into the sea, it was *moving!*—and that was the grand problem to be solved, how to get it moved at all. The power which proved itself equal to moving it would ultimately prove equal to its total overthrow. The mountain would one day be buried by the rising tide of religious liberty.

Mr. JOHN TEMPLETON supported the resolution, and pointed out the important bearing which the instruction of young men in the principles of the Society and the enlistment of their co-operation on its behalf, would have upon the ultimate achievement of the object it had in view. He also related some incidents in connection with the working of the young men's movement. The promoters of this movement had been followed into every district of London by a small band of doughty champions of the Church who had sought on every occasion to make speeches on their side of the question. They were always courteously listened to, and their remarks had often suggested a potent argument in favour of the principles of this Society.

Mr. CHARLES GILPIN, M.P., supported the resolution. He said: Within the last fortnight I have heard more than one true friend of religious liberty say from the benches of the House of Commons that he was not a member of the Liberation Society. Well, Sir, I *am* a member of the Liberation Society. (Cheers.) I remember some three or four years ago, when in a subordinate office under Lord Palmerston's Government, the leader of the Opposition *then*—the leader (to our discredit be it spoken,—of the House of Commons *now*—calling the attention of the noble lord to the fact that one of those who sat on the Treasury Bench beside him had absolutely—(save your feelings)—presided at a meeting of the Liberation Society! Well, the statement was not true as it happened, but it *might* have been, and that answered the purpose of the right honourable gentleman. But I shall never forget the peculiar answer which the jocund man of seventy-nine gave me when I said, "Shall I reply to what Disraeli is saying?" "Never mind him—(much laughter)—it is little matter what he says." Well, Sir, I "never minded" him, and have not done so much from that day to this. The House of Commons has recently been a study. Mr. Bright told the honourable members opposite last night, that he saw upon their faces an expression which he had been accustomed to see very often, especially when they were wrong; and I assure you that to sit upon what are now the Opposition benches of the House, and to look upon the Ministerial benches, and especially those benches occupied by "the country party," and trace countenance after countenance as their great leader gives utterance to something which yet more and more astounds them day after day, forces you to the belief that they have come to the melancholy conclusion that "all the foundations of the earth are out of course." (Laughter and cheers.) They look so melancholy, they breathe so dismally, they speak so hopelessly, that we feel that they have a claim upon our very heart of hearts. Before I proceed further, I want to bear my testimony to what has been incidentally alluded to, and that is the great want which we have had in the House of Commons during the whole of our recent debates, and which, as I am sure my honoured friend in the chair will confirm me in saying, we feel every night of these ecclesiastical debates—the presence of Edward Miall. (Cheers.) Sir, no man has taken his place, and I do not intend it as a vain compliment, for compliments are not much in my way, when I say that there is no man in the House of Commons who can take the particular place which he would have filled. During the whole of a long continued discussion we have had an almost absolute absence of speeches from the standpoint of this Society. The very leaders of our question have been apt to use this language (many of them have used it privately, and some of them publicly)—"It is no use to talk about general abstract principles now; get the one thing you are aiming after." Probably they were right, only my notion is that it is right to speak the truth upon a matter of this sort at all times, without taking into consideration the mere question of expediency. Well, during these recent debates we have had most mournful prophecies of what will be the result if the Irish State Church is abolished. We have had the prophecies of the junior members of the Government, and upon a recent occasion an honourable gentleman sitting behind the Treasury Bench likened the Irish State Church to Cæsar, and Gladstone, forsooth! was the Brutus—"*Et tu Brute!*" and, pretending to hold up a garment, he quoted amongst the cheers of certainly a very small following who sat behind him—

Though this, the well-beloved Brutus stabbed,
And as he plucked his cursed steel away—

and so on. But from that we come to the prognostication of the right honourable gentleman at the head of her Majesty's Government, who tells you that this step which we are going to take, which to a certain extent we *have* taken, and which, please God, we *will* take—both to disendow and disestablish the Church of Ireland and all the religious sects in that country—is one step towards all Protestantism in Ireland going into the wide maw of the Church of Rome. He absolutely ignores the fact that in a great part of her Majesty's dominions Protestantism is not established, and yet that the inhabitants did not go to the Church of Rome: he ignores the fact that in that great country of the United States Protestantism and Episcopalianism are not established, and yet that they go on with their glorious and mighty work far better than if it were established. This right honourable gentleman tells you—tells us—tells all—that the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland means that Protestants are to become Roman Catholics. Now, Sir, will my honoured friends around me excuse me if I ask, Are we as Dissenters thoroughly educated in our own principles? Do we believe them to the extent of carrying them out on the hustings and at the poll? I have a reason for asking this. I took a considerable interest in an election which has just taken place in East Kent, where the one question raised was the Established Church of Ireland, and practically that question alone; and I was told only last evening by the gentleman who had the management of the election on the Liberal side, that the cause of the failure at that election at a critical time like this, and the return of a Tory—a supporter of Benjamin Disraeli and the Irish Establishment—was that a large number of Dissenters had been frightened by the "No Popery" cry, and had kept absolutely from the poll altogether. Now, Sir, if this be true—and I speak on the authority of Mr. Knatchbull Hugessen, who devoted himself earnestly to the support of what he believed to be the right party—we have something to do in East Kent to make our principles thoroughly understood. (Applause.)

The Rev. Dr. STOCK, of Devonport, in a brief speech, contrasted the position now occupied by the Society with that in which it stood four-and-twenty years ago. The resolution was carried unanimously.

The Rev. Dr. GOTCH, Chairman of the Baptist Union, moved the next resolution, namely:—

That in the increasing support afforded to measures for abolishing sectarian tests in the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, as well as in the strength of opinion in favour of the conscience clause, in connection with primary education, and in the recommendations of the commissioners appointed to inquire into the condition of endowed schools, the Conference find gratifying evidence of the public determination that in all national institutions of an educational character the principle of religious equality shall be fully recognised, while it anticipates from the adoption of that principle the best results in relation to the cause of education, and to the general welfare of the community.

The rev. gentleman briefly commented on the resolution, and in the course of his remarks stated that he attributed much of the alteration which had taken place in the public mind on the subject of tests to the influence exerted by the Society. In confirmation of Mr. Gilpin's statement that Dissenters had withheld their support from Liberal candidates from a fear that the disendowment of Protestantism would lead to an increase of Popery, he asserted that Mr. Morley had lost votes in the Bristol election from that cause. The Nonconformist communities required better instruction with regard to the effect of disestablishment.

The Rev. ANDREW REED, of St. Leonard's, seconded the resolution. He said that those who knew University life knew that it needed pluck to stand up for a principle around which discredit was thrown; and all honour should be paid to those noble young men who had shown such heroism at Oxford and Cambridge. He had reason to believe that they had not lost esteem and respect amongst either the young men or the heads of the Universities for the decision which they had manifested.

Mr. MIALL then rose, amid loud and continued applause, and said that he wished to render an act of justice to those who had taken part in the University question. (Hear, hear.) Not one member of the Society, he was quite convinced, would like to appropriate to its action that which did not fairly belong to it. That was not, properly speaking, their movement. They had, indeed, some twelve or fourteen years ago, moved the opening of the Universities to Dissenting students, and they carried it. But the latter movement was one which originated in Oxford amongst Churchmen—(Hear, hear)—members of the University—Goldwin Smith, Charles Roundell, the Dean of Christchurch, and Mr. Jowett, the Greek professor. He had had the happiness of working in conjunction with them almost from the origin of their movement; and all the Society could take credit for was that they had brought the whole of their political influence and power to back their liberal resolutions and plans. Honour should be paid where it was due, and they could not appropriate to themselves that which did not fairly belong to them.

The CHAIRMAN then put the resolution, which was carried unanimously, and the Rev. Edward White was called on to read a paper on "Modern Theories of Church Establishments."

Mr. WHITE'S paper began with a general view of the change in the theory of Establishments since the days of the Tudors and Stuarts, and in the modes of supporting them. The modern theory led to the abandonment of all persecution, and restricted the action of the State to

the bestowment of special privilege on those who adhered to the selected belief. The progress of Liberal opinion was traced up to the present time, when the great conclusion has been reached by the nation that no further sanction shall be given to the establishment of the religion of a *minority*. The argument was then resumed on the question, who the creed of a *majority* should be established, and reckoned to be justly established, and the defences recently set forth on this behalf were classified into—first, those which were brought forward in general support of things as they are; secondly, those which are designed to advocate the connection of Church and State, under various modifications of the Church not yet existing; and thirdly, those which are founded on the supposed consequences of totally separating the two. The general argument in support of the union of the Church and State on the plea of connecting the principle of religion with Government, was thus dealt with:—"A respectable, but mistaken, sentiment lies behind these and similar representations. Every well-principled man, in proportion to the greatness of the power which he wields, in proportion to the extent of the interests affected by his conduct, feels the need of some moral law to regulate his procedure. Placed on their dangerous elevations, and warned by the evils inflicted on the world by wicked rulers, the best statesmen are ever forward to proclaim that great powers ought to be governed by great principles; and that the principles which alone can be depended on to produce integrity and benevolence in the administration of States are those which are termed moral and religious. As strongly as possible, and in opposition to the assertion that a State governor is only a superior policeman, employed to execute the selfish behests of the multitude, we assent to the doctrine that legislation and government should render homage to the moral laws of the Eternal Sovereign, and that statesmen should acknowledge those laws at every step of their procedure. Our policy is at the farthest remove from the creation of what is called a godless State. All legislation is an attempt to govern men's actions by a principle. That principle must be moral, and a moral principle points to a Divine authority. As strongly as possible, however, we deny that, in order to recognise moral principle in Government, it is necessary or expedient to establish or endow Christianity and its churches. The law of the State represents the principle of eternal justice as between man and man. The religion of Christ represents the principle of mercy to law-breakers, and on that basis requires from its adherents a rule of conduct which can never be applied in the administration of existing kingdoms. The word religion, therefore, has two senses. It may signify either the system of moral principle, which is summed up in the law of justice and humanity (and in this sense it is that religion is required by statesmen to guide their deliberations). Or it may signify that Christian system which is a special revelation, and which is capable of application only in private life. This is the teaching of Christianity itself. The magistrate is to defend the right between man and man even with the sword. The Christian is required by his religion to turn the other cheek to the smiter, which is just the very thing which the ruler of the State ought not to do. The true establishment of religion in states and kingdoms is the establishment of just and equal principles of administration in their laws and institutions. It is all the religion of which they are capable. It is all that the Almighty requires of them. To attempt to connect any selected Christian church with the State will produce only confusion. It will rob the State of its justice and the church of its grace." The argument for the justice of establishing the religion of a majority was then examined, in comparison with the admitted injustice of establishing the Church of a minority. It was shown by a gradual process of reduction that the "injustice" of establishing the Church of one in nine, as in Ireland, is a moral principle which receives all its force per arithmetic, and would gradually vanish away until equality was reached, when it would be neither just nor unjust to establish the religion of one party, and then it would begin to be just when a majority was attained. But the rights of majorities are limited by several moral laws. A clear majority, for example, could not justly declare a minority outlaws. Therefore the rights of majorities are limited to the natural and inalienable rights of individual citizenship. A clear majority could not justly apply the public money to the payment of their own bakers' bills or municipal taxation. Why not? Because these are things not within the province of the State to perform. No majority then possesses rights which will interfere with individual rights or individual obligations. And it is yet to be shown that it is the duty, and therefore the right, of the State to pay for men's spiritual requirements rather than to pay for their alimentary expenses. The mere will of a majority gives no rights. The will of the majority, apart from justice, is only violence in wrong. Justice requires that all subjects should be dealt with on one principle by the law; that whatever privilege, advantage, honour, or property any man acquires by his genius, or industry, or worth, should be secured to him and to his descendants by the State, but that there should be no groundless favouritism, no fancy monopolies, no expenditure of public moneys on a party, religious, æsthetic, commercial, or political, just to please that party; and above all that there can be no setting up of portions of the population in positions of privilege on the ground of taste, colour, or creed, which will tend to produce in the excluded and depressed parties a sense of injustice and social wrong, to awaken jealousy, and so to weaken their attachment to the commonwealth. For this is the nature of the operation of all sectarian monopolies. They tend to excite arrogance in the favoured party, as if they were a sort of spiritual *noblesse*, to awaken animosity in the persons excluded from privilege, and to strengthen the attachment of such excluded persons to their own sect or party, to the great damage of social harmony and of their allegiance to the State. Mr. White then proceeded to the examination of Dean Stanley's paper, which is devoted to a maintenance of the connection of Church and State under amended conditions of the Church not yet existing. It was shown that these conditions are not likely ever to exist. That the Anglican party and the Evangelicals have no desire to unite with Methodists, Independents, Baptists, much less with Roman Catholics, Unitarians, Quakers, and Swedenborgians. It was also hown that the very conception of the Church in the ew of the Dean of Westminster differs from that of e Nonconformist communities. He regards the Church as comprising the whole nation. They look upon the Church as consisting only of a selection from the nation. By no possibility, therefore, could they ever agree to enter a vast ecclesiastical system in which distinctions of doctrine were treated as non-existent, in which there was no godly discipline, in which the appointment of the chief officers was vested in the British Government, and in which perpetual encouragement was afforded to what they reciprocally regarded as pernicious errors. Not the less, however, do we recognise with the Dean of Westminster the importance of setting up over all religionists one supreme authority, which shall secure to them their equal social rights, maintain their titles to property, govern by fixed precedents its descent and distribution, and, as far as is necessary, keep the public peace between them by insisting on habits of mutual toleration. And that supreme authority, that royal supremacy in things ecclesiastical, if you so prefer to call it, we shall find in a State which treats all religious bodies with equal favour, and wins the allegiance of all by partial administration of laws dictated by the common interest, and devised by the united councils of the nation. Into such an "ark" we all, "clean and unclean," are willing to enter with the Dean of Westminster—an ark not of the Church, but of the just and beneficent State. The third portion of the paper was devoted to the examination of the predictions of social despotisms to arise when the Church is disestablished in England. It was shown that the rivalries of several hierarchies render it very likely that the laity will be educated into the habit of thinking for themselves; but we have no space for any notice of this part of the argument.

At the conclusion of the paper, which was received with much applause,

Mr. MIALL said: I have a resolution to move in reference to the subjects which have been brought forward in the paper just read; but I am certain that my dear friend, Mr. White, who has read that paper, will allow me to put it aside for one moment in order that I may make one or two remarks respecting the present position of our affairs. (Hear, hear.) I am afraid we are getting too sanguine. There is just that tone of elevation that may be the pulsation of health; that might be the flush indicating a commencement of fever. I myself have received, and the Liberation Society have received, numbers of congratulations from all parts of the country as though the work were done; and the tone—a very natural tone—which has been taken by this Conference to-day has been a tone of triumph; as though we had got through the difficulties of our work, and expected very soon to realise the accomplishment of our purpose. I can only say for myself, in presence of those congratulations that I have received, and that have been so grateful to my heart, I never felt the weakness and impotency of men's will in relation to the movements of Divine government so much as I have done this day. (Hear, hear.) We have sown a seed that has sprung up we know not how; and all that we can say is that we have done the duty that devolved upon us for the day. It might be a harder duty, or it might be a pleasanter duty; but whichever it was, it was a duty that we could perform, and that we have performed. And the honour of turning that duty to account, and producing such an effect as has been produced upon the mind of this nation throughout its lengths and its breadths, is not ours, nor should it be appropriated by us—(Hear, hear)—and until we can move forward in that spirit, exclusively believing that we are mere instruments in the hands of Divine Providence for the accomplishment not of our purposes, but of His—until we can do that, I do not think we are fully prepared to take to the end the great enterprise upon which we have entered. Now one word with respect to the paper which has been just read. No doubt there are those who will say that we have done an imprudent thing in putting forward the great ultimate question in the presence of this partial and minor one. We are simply pursuing the rule that we have pursued from the beginning. We did not make our questions for the convenience of statesmen. (Hear, hear.) We are not deeply interested in the relative position of minor political and Parliamentary parties. We do not wish in the slightest degree to throw any obstacle in the way of the success of that proposal which has already been made in Parliament; but we were known before that proposal was made. Our aims and designs have been known from the beginning. We do not dwell upon them now, but we shall not be silent about them now. (Applause.) We do not expect that because we are carrying the Irish Church question that therefore we have carried the English Church question; or that the two questions are exactly parallel and identical; for the one unquestionably is in a different position in relation to political sentiments and principles, than the other. But we cannot but admit, with our friend Mr. White, who has so eloquently discussed, or rather argued upon, this question, that moral principle cannot be restrained in its application to mere numbers; that what is unjust to many must of necessity be unjust to a few, and that injustice in itself is a thing that we ought to seek to put down, whether it applies to the many or to the few. At the same time, I think we have given to the world sufficient assurance and pledge that we are not going to rush against a dead wall. We know how to take our steps one by one. Assuredly no one will hear us say that we intend to stop with the disestablishment of the Irish Church. (Hear, hear.) We did not set up this organisation for that limited purpose. But we will work most heartily with those who see with us as far as that point, and when they bid us farewell as being unable to go with us further, we earnestly trust that we shall be able to leave behind in their minds some seed of truth that the sunshine of circumstances, or the tempests of political life, may ferment, and quicken, and ripen; and that one day or other they may come to be as heartily convinced respecting the English Church as they are now respecting the Irish Church. (Applause.) This one thing we wish to proclaim to all the world, that we want no change in the English Church,—that we want no establishment or disendowment of the Church of England, until public opinion is prepared for it. Our duty is simply to preach to public opinion. We have from the beginning made use of that weapon which the Apostle of the Gentiles has termed foolishness. We have been able to bear the ridicule of men who have no faith in the energy of truth; and now that that truth has burst forth in all its beauty, and its glory, and its power, though it have reference only to one institution, men seem to wonder how it is possible that we could bring about such a result. We did not bring it about: the truth that we proclaimed did. (Applause.) And we believe whatever may be the gigantic strength of the Church Establishment in this country—a strength that we find ourselves unequal to, I will not say assail, but to overpower now, and perhaps for many years to come—whatever may be its gigantic strength, we can calmly look to the end, believing as we do that He whom we serve and whose Word we are attempting to proclaim, will make that truth as a seed, even in the cleft of the rock, and by His influence upon that seed will so swell and expand it that no mechanical power whatever shall be able to resist the energy of the living power of truth. ("Hear, hear," and applause.) And this is the whole secret of the success of this Society. We have done nothing wonderful; we have made use of no means which were not within the compass of the Church Establishment itself; we have effected no change but those which might have been effected by earnestness anywhere; and this has been the sole advantage that we have had over those who now wonder at our triumph, and who fancy that there has been wonderful wisdom in the transaction of our affairs. The sole advantage that we have had in conducting this Society is that we have had a right purpose, and have gone to it, I trust, in a right spirit; and where rightness is at the beginning and rightness at the end, the God of rightness removes all intervening difficulties. (Great applause.) The resolution I move is as follows:—

That this Conference observes with satisfaction the general progress of public opinion in favour of a just equality in the relations of the State towards ecclesiastical bodies—the only principle which, in the judgment of the Conference, can secure permanent tranquillity to the Empire. Nevertheless, it feels bound to protest against any application of that principle which would take the form of proposals for extending State-patronage and support to conflicting religious creeds and institutions; as being repugnant to the conscientious convictions of the religious community; as opposed to the interests of truth; as inflicting injustice in new forms; and as being unnecessary, with a view to the expression of the religious life of the nation.

The Rev. J. T. BROWN, of Northampton, briefly seconded the resolution, which he said embodied the essence of the admirable paper they had heard, and which had been moved by the equally admirable speech of their friend Mr. Miall. He trusted that in the spirit of mellow wisdom with which that gentleman counselled them they would go forth to this great work. Their great instrumentality had been preaching, and they wanted preaching yet; and, next to the living voice, he knew of no preacher equal to the one he had been listening to week after week, for he was afraid to say how many years. The Conference could do no better service to their principles than see that now the country had an ear to hear, and minds were ready to receive the truth, that the *Nonconformist* was circulated far and wide. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. VARLEY, of Notting-hill Tabernacle, said he rose to thank Mr. Miall for the instruction he furnished week by week in the columns of that inestimable paper the *Nonconformist*. Most gentlemen present would be aware that a meeting was to be held on the Thursday morning, to take steps to increase its circulation, and he hoped they would be well represented on that occasion. On another point, he presumed they all felt that the country was in no danger whatever from Popery, but that they would to a man say that the national proclivities of England were not in the direction of any ecclesiastical system of any kind. Political capital was being made out of that great bugbear the "No Popery" cry, and a more legitimate use could not be made of their sanctuaries than to expose to the working men soon to be enfranchised this hollow fallacy. (Hear, hear.)

The CHAIRMAN said a note had been handed to him asking whether the paper just read ought not to be published. (Hear, hear.) A motion on that subject would be submitted on the following day.

The resolution before the meeting was then put, and unanimously carried.

At the suggestion of Mr. VARLEY, three cheers were given for her Majesty the Queen, and the first verse of the National Anthem was heartily sung. The Conference then adjourned.

THIRD SITTING.—WEDNESDAY MORNING.

The Conference resumed its adjourned meeting at eleven o'clock. — Butler, Esq., of Leeds, in the chair.

The CHAIRMAN said they had drunk deeply at these meetings of the wine of joy. Joy was quite as bracing a thing as affliction. This society had known affliction, but now its time of joy was come. He trusted, however, that they would not drink too deeply, and would preserve sobriety in the midst of it. (Laughter.) Let them remember, after all, that it was not their question that was triumphing, but God's question. If men triumphed, it was because they followed Him who "shall reign till He has put all His enemies under His feet." There was more fighting to come for those who had the British love of fighting. Even this afternoon Theodore's big gun was to be dragged out. (Laughter.) The Archbishop of Canterbury was to appear, and the enemy would be coming forth and airing himself. (Laughter.) When error was thus dragged forth into the light, its doom was near at hand. When air once got access to the error no doubt it would all crumble away. A great part of the fighting would, however, still be left to be done by them. They must not suppose that the party in the Church with which they sympathised was coming forth to help them. Many of the Obstinates would return to the City of Destruction and leave them in the quagmire alone. They had got thus far not by force, but by gentleness. After all it was the old story: the gentlest things were the strongest if only they had life in them. Some gentlemen might know a certain churchyard where there was a tombstone lifted up into the air, which had been burst and split by an ash tree growing under it. It was a very little sapling that burst the tomb, but it was stronger than the stone, because it had life in it. Therefore, as they had a tree that possessed life, they did not doubt what the issue would be. With respect to their duty in the future, he thought it most necessary that they should remember that that duty was not so well described under the image of a contest or a battle; its object was rather to disentangle truth from error, (Hear, hear,) and to show them apart. It was the truth that was mixed with error that conserved it. The lie that was half a truth, as Tennyson told them, was the worst

kind of lie. They should endeavour, as far as possible, to put themselves to the standpoint of their opponents, and to disentangle the truth from the error. They must hold up the light to them. Many men were now groping for the light, and as he believed that the Liberation Society possessed the light, they should try to make it manifest. They wanted these waverers to understand what the Society meant, and to comprehend the truth. They must go forth to the work in a spirit of love and conciliation. Now, in the days of their coming triumph, they must take care not to show the savageness that sometimes came with victory. Charles Lamb once saw a butcher trying to get a calf along the street, and said to him, "Try conciliation." The butcher, however, hit the animal a tremendous blow and stunned him. He then lifted the calf into the cart, and said, "There, I think I have conciliated him." (Laughter,) They did not want that sort of conciliation, and they could do no better than listen to Mr. Miall's speeches and read his writings. The men who were coming out of the Church had a burden to bear, and they should go forth and give them all the help they could. The sack was very heavy for the unaccustomed shoulders; let them try to bear a part of it. (Cheers.) They must be led to see that the figure coming over the waves, and which caused them to cry out, "It is a spirit," was one whose voice, when heard, would reassure them, "It is I, be not afraid." Some of their friends who had been terribly apathetic hitherto must now come forth and join them. They had said long enough to Mr. Miall and his co-labourers,—"Watchmen, what of the night?" The time was now come when they could say, "The day is coming," and all must arise to do their duty. (Cheers.)

The SECRETARY read letters regretting their absence, and approving of the objects of the Society, from Mr. Dillwyn, M.P., Mr. Hadfield, M.P., Mr. Graham, M.P. for Glasgow, Rev. Thos. Binney, and others.

Mr. COPEMAN, of Norwich, read the names of the gentlemen presented as members of the Executive Committee and Council for the next three years.

The Rev. W. GRIFFITH, of Derby, moved the adoption of the report presented by the committee appointed to select the future officers. He said he should feel himself in a very unfortunate position if, in holding the resolution in his hand, and proposing certain gentlemen as their executive, he had the damping thought weighing upon his soul that he was proposing to them for their acceptance an executive that would only hold office by sufferance. (Laughter.) The proposed executive was composed of well-tried men, and men whose names would survive the union of the Church and State —(cheers)—and still live when archbishops were unknown in this country. (Laughter.) Mr. Miall was a host in himself, and his weekly productions had become part and parcel of their mental, moral, political, and ecclesiastical being. He was glad to find that the Society did not keep in the background what their ultimate object was, namely, the destruction of the monster evil of this country, a religious establishment.

Mr. GRIMWADE, of Ipswich, seconded the resolution. He called attention to the remarkable way in which this question had grown, even in agricultural districts, of late. Its progress had been most extraordinary, and must be still more rapid as light was thrown upon it. He had always felt that the Liberation Society was moving for the greatest religious principle, and he therefore greatly regretted that the Evangelical party in the Church had put themselves in their present position.

The Rev. H. W. BROWN said he regarded Mr. Miall's absence from the House of Commons as a humiliation and degradation to the whole Nonconformist body. It was not a question merely affecting Mr. Miall personally, but affecting the body of which he was the recognised leader. (Applause.) There was one aspect of the Irish Church question to which he should like to refer. He viewed it as a purely religious question, and it seemed to him as if that Church had become, instead of our Father's house, a den of thieves. He used the expression in the same sense in which our Master Himself used it when He cast out those who bought and sold in the Temple, saying that His Father's house, instead of being a House of Prayer, had really become a den of thieves. It would be intensely comical, if it were not so intensely sad, to find gentlemen in receipt of large incomes for discharging the duties of an office, or occupying a position to which no duties whatever are attached, which duties they condescended to discharge by deputy. It was not likely that there would be much enthusiasm on the part of English Churchmen in the support of the Irish Church. If, as he believed, the Irish Church would get on much better for its disestablishment and disendowment than it had before, English Churchmen would have the greatest reason to be satisfied with the change; and if it did not succeed, then English Churchmen would have a woful example to point to, and therefore ought to be more than ever grateful that the experiment had been made.

The CHAIRMAN invited the free expression of opinion, or advice to the executive committee on the part of the delegates, previous to the resolution being put.

Mr. WM. FORBES (of London) said he had been very much surprised since the recent debates in the House of Commons to find that a large number of the supporters of the Irish Church continued to fight for it. He had some friends in the Church of England whom he met a few days ago, and they told him with great glee, "We have got some excellent arguments and statistics in favour of the Irish Church." This was after the division in the House of Commons, and therefore he said, "Well, I like fighting as much as anybody, and I think it is well to fight as long as there is any use in fighting, but I see no use whatever in fighting after the battle is won." The matter was settled, there was no doubt about it, no matter what House of Commons might be elected. He recollected the story of an Irishman falling into a fit, and some one calling out, "Are you dead, Paddy?" "No," said he, "but I'm quite spacheless." It struck him (Mr. Forbes) that the Irish Church was in the reverse position—it was dead but not speechless. (Laughter.) It continued to speak after it was dead. He had been also much surprised at a remark made in the House of Commons about the Liberation Society. The idea appeared to be entertained that the Liberation Society were playing into the hands of the Roman Catholics. What a delusion! People who held that opinion did not know the members of the Liberation Society. Further, it was said that the Liberation Society would be one of the first victims of the Roman Catholics. He supposed it was imagined that the Roman Catholics would take Mr. Miall and burn him as the representative of the Liberation Society. Was that what was meant? (Laughter.) There was no other way in which they would become victims. The union between Church and State put him in mind of a story of a man and his wife who lived very unhappily together. A friend stepped in one day when they were sitting in the room with the view of trying to settle matters and making things agreeable. There happened to be a dog and a cat sitting very quietly before the fire, and the gentleman said, "See how very happily and friendly the dog and cat get on: can't you take a lesson?" "Yes," said the gentleman, "that's all very true, but just tie them together, and see how they'll get on." (Laughter.) He believed that was applicable to the Church and State, which would get on very well together, provided they were not united. (Applause.)

Mr. TURNER, of Oakham, said he was quite sure every gentleman present knew how utterly fallacious and hollow was the cry of "No Popery," which had been raised by the supporters of the Irish Church, but he was afraid for that very reason they would not give it sufficient attention. (Hear, hear.) The members of the Conference had heard what Dr. Brock told them on the previous evening about Bristol, that a great many votes were lost at the recent election on account of the "No Popery" cry. He would just mention what was the state of things in the part of the country from which he came. He came from the county of Rutland, where the party sometimes called "The stupid party" reigned supreme. Though the population was only 20,000, they returned two members. There had been only one contest for many years, because the elections were settled for the constituency by a few aristocrats. But what was the state of things in that county? During the last few weeks petitions had been got up in nearly every parish in the county, praying for the continuance of the Irish Church, and the only argument that had been used to induce persons to sign those petitions was that they were petitions against Popery, praying that Mr. Gladstone might not be enabled to do some very dreadful thing which he contemplated doing, which would be most disastrous to Protestantism and be playing into the hands of the Papal party. He would suggest to the executive council the desirability of preparing a tract which should be sent broadcast over the whole country, especially designed to expose the fallacy of the "No Popery" cry. He thought ministers might take a good many more opportunities than they did of making known the principles of the Liberation Society, and he humbly conceived that, apart from those great doctrines of the Gospel which relate to men's personal salvation, they could not do anything more likely, humanly speaking, to promote the glory of God and the salvation of man, than to set forth those principles which related to the spirituality of Christ's kingdom, and which lay at the basis of Nonconformity.

Mr. WICKS, of Colchester, was anxious that the Conference should result in some practical good. They had heard that not only at Bristol had their valued and honoured friend Mr. Morley lost his seat from the disaffection of men who ought to have supported him, but that in East Kent also there had been a disastrous defeat. What fools people must be who were blinded by that arch-traitor and trickster, Mr. Disraeli! It seemed that it was necessary to begin again, and teach men why Dissenters refused to conform to the Church of England. He trusted that not only would the executive committee give their special attention to this matter, but that the whole of the delegates would go back to their respective districts, and convene their friends together, with the view of laying before them the stirring speeches and matters which they had heard at this Conference, and revivify them, so that they might not have the fearful disgrace come upon them. (Applause.)

The Rev. H. T. ROBJOHNS, of Newcastle, said every minister present knew that practically it was very difficult ministers to educate their congregations upon these subjects; but there was one plan which he had found to answer in his own experience, of giving a lecture about once a fortnight at the week-night services upon the religious history of our country since the Reformation. There were a great many text-books available for those who needed them, in order to prepare a course of lectures, and certainly not least among them was that written by Mr. Skeats. (Applause.)

The Rev. JAMES MURSELL said he could abundantly confirm the gentleman from Oakham, in regard to the unscrupulousness of this "No Popery" cry in that neighbourhood, with a view to misrepresent the proceedings of the Liberation Society. He would recommend the executive committee to organise local lectures, and to carry that kind of agency not only into greater towns, but also into the smaller ones and into country districts. He thought they ought to watch more earnestly for opportunities of teaching the young persons in the different congregations why they were what they professed to be. (Hear, hear.)

The Rev. T. WATTS, of St. Alban's, concurred in the view that there was great danger of underrating the importance of the "No Popery" cry. He could not read the history of this country without seeing that it had been a most powerful cry in all past time. It was said, "Oh, people are too enlightened to be carried away by that now"; but he believed that unless there were some strong and well-directed efforts made to still further enlighten public opinion on this matter, it was just possible that at a general election their large majority might become a very small one, or disappear altogether. Their opponents were endeavouring to show the country that the Nonconformists were directly or indirectly, knowingly or unknowingly, playing into the hands of the Church of Rome. Let the executive committee, therefore, do something to neutralise those efforts, and show the falsehood of those assertions. (Applause.)

The Rev. J. T. BROWN, of Northampton, thought the suggestion of organising some system of lecturing for our villages and small towns was one of the best for the purpose of meeting and dispelling the erroneous feeling which so largely prevailed. Ministers, he knew, were little omnipotences — (laughter) — and great expectations were entertained of them. Well, there was one way in which they might do essential service. If they would not lecture, they might get more thoroughly circulated, and more generally read, especially among the young folks, the paper which had been the tutor of so many of themselves. They had never had a crisis more solemn or more momentous, or one in which it behoved them to present in the clearest and best possible way the views to which they were attached.

Mr. WARBURTON (of Manchester) advocated a very large distribution of the tracts issued by the Society, which he said were short, clear, and precisely what were required. In Manchester they could circulate a vast number if they had them.

The Rev. I. DOXSEY said, when he saw the statement sent forth from high quarters that Mr. Miall had become suddenly very liberal towards the Church, it occurred to him that it would be wise to do what was done so well when this Society began its operations, namely, to hold meetings in the small towns as well as in the large ones, for the purpose of enlightening the masses of the people. It never was more important to do this than now.

Mr. BEAVIS, of Greenwich, asked if there was not some way of testing the mode in which petitions presented to the House of Parliament had been got up. He mentioned an instance at Greenwich of a meeting in favour of the Irish Church, where the room was not half full, though scores of Liberals were excluded from admission. A minister, who moved an amendment, was violently expelled, and others retired in disgust. After that, when a mere handful remained, the resolution was passed, and a petition unanimously agreed upon. There ought, certainly, to be some means of testing petitions.

The motion for the appointment of the executive committee was then carried unanimously.

Mr. W. EDWARDS, the Treasurer, having thanked the meeting for his re-election, said, With regard to the suggestion about the duty of ministers towards their own people, he apprehended it was not for the executive committee to deal with; it must be left to those whom it immediately concerned. He thought, however, that in their exposition of the Word of God ministers had very large opportunities of instructing young people in the principles of religious liberty. As to the larger distribution of tracts throughout the country, and the advisability of delivering lectures and holding meetings in villages and small towns, these were matters which properly came within the province of the executive committee, and they would no doubt take them most carefully into consideration. Funds, however, would be needed, and he earnestly called on all friends of the Society to strengthen the hands of the executive committee by contributing largely to the list of subscriptions. (Cheers.)

The Rev. WM. REED, of London, moved the adoption of the list of the council for the next three years. They had complained, he said, a good deal of the apathy of the Methodist body, but he found that no less than three of the previous speakers were members of that body, so that they could complain no more. He believed that there was a vast amount of correct public opinion in relation to this great subject of religious liberty, which only needed to be evoked in order to add very powerfully to those mighty influences which were now in operation.

Mr. R. D. CATCHPOOL, of Reading, seconded the motion. He belonged to a small section of the religious world which had stood first in the army of Nonconformity, who had sacrificed their interests and resisted unto the death. If every other sect had acted in the same way, the struggle would long since have been terminated.

Mr. P. A. TAYLOR, M.P. for Leicester, supported the resolution, which was then agreed to.

The Rev. C. STOVEL moved—

That it be an instruction to the business committee to prepare and bring up a suitable resolution, expressive of the sense entertained by the Conference of their loss in the lamented departure of the Rev. Thomas Price, L.L.D.

This motion was seconded by the Rev. J. D. HENDERSON and carried unanimously.

The Rev. J. G. ROGERS, B.A., then read his paper on "The Ritualistic Movement in the Church of England in relation to the Establishment." The paper commenced by a reference to the difficulty of determining as to the real character of the Church of England, and the advantage which she thus gained by the fact that this very uncertainty enables her to preserve in her ranks men of the most opposite and irreconcileable opinions. The Liberation Society does not possess to decide between competing parties, each of whom claims to be the orthodox type of Churchmanship. But it insists upon the fact that the very existence of such parties is itself a sufficient answer to many of the pleas urged on behalf of the Establishment. The speaker then proceeded to examine one of the most prevalent of these, the idea that the Establishment is the great defence of English Protestantism. Without entering into the question, whether Protestantism requires, or requiring ought to have such a defence, it simply challenged the position, so confidently maintained, that it is a Protestant institution. If this were the case, it ought to allow no teaching anti-Protestant in its character, but it contains within itself a party earnestly maintaining that it was never intended to be Protestant at all, and employing all their art and power to give it that Catholic character which they assert it ought to possess. In order to support this, he reviewed the evidence furnished by their own writings as to the spirit, teachings and aims of the so-called "Catholic" party. He illustrated that bitter hostility to the name and memories of Protestantism by references to the utterances of their own organs and leaders, and especially by a lecture recently delivered by Dr. Littledale, in which Protestant principles are repudiated, the names most venerated among the Reformers held up to ridicule and contempt, and even the Protestant martyrs described as suffering "a righteous retribution for their undoubted crimes." He proved, as could easily be done, that they denied the fundamental principles of Protestantism, set up in that theory of sacramental grace, the idea of a materialism in Christianity, essentially opposed to the Protestant view of a spiritual life, and especially in the doctrine of a real presence, inculcate a view which Protestantism regards as rank superstition, and encourage a style of worship which it holds to be mere idolatry. He then pointed out that their projects for the reunion of Christendom really mean an absolute and unconditional surrender to the Church of Rome—an object which they openly avow, and to advance which they retain their present position in the Anglican Church. He then contended that no power had yet been found able or willing to vindicate Protestantism against these persistent and audacious attacks. The party are not now for the first time asserting these principles, but have been propagating their views for more than thirty years, and are stronger

(*Continued in the body of the Paper.*)

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